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Economic and Social Council

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Organizational session for 1995

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 1 February 1995, at noon

Temporary President: Mr. BUTLER (Australia)

President: Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan)

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The meeting was called to order at 12.20 p.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT declared open the organizational session of the Economic and Social Council for 1995.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF JAMES P. GRANT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT paid tribute to the memory of James P. Grant.

At the invitation of the Temporary President, the members of the Council observed a minute of silence.

EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY IN CONNECTION WITH THE RECENT EARTHQUAKE IN JAPAN AND THE RECENT FLOODS IN WESTERN EUROPE

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT, on behalf of all members of the Council, expressed sympathy to the Governments of Japan and of those countries of Western Europe affected by floods in connection with the recent natural disasters in their countries.

STATEMENT BY THE TEMPORARY PRESIDENT

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT said that at the beginning of 1994 the Economic and Social Council, a Charter organ, had been concerned with the manner in which it conducted its work and with how to improve its effectiveness and efficiency. On both counts there had been progress. The Council should now bear in mind that it would be the centre of attention in 1995 with the completion, at the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, of a cycle of six major conferences over the past five years relating to the economic and social sectors. Completion of the cycle, together with the agenda for development, would result in seven main inputs for a new agenda relating to human security concerned, not with military matters, but with human welfare and the fourth goal of the United Nations Charter: better standards of life in larger freedom. In the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization attention would be focused on the Economic and Social Council and on how to implement that new agenda.

Priority had thus far been given to improving the Economic and Social Council within its existing framework, but attention should now be directed

towards the widening of that framework to enable the Council, in the second half century of the Organization's existence, to play the role intended for it in the Charter. The task was challenging, but members could take heart in the encouraging progress made over the past year.

ELECTION OF THE BUREAU

The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT informed the members of the Council that the Group of Asian States had endorsed the candidacy of Mr. Kamal (Pakistan) for the office of President of the Council for 1995.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan) was elected President by acclamation.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan) took the Chair.

The PRESIDENT said that, under rule 18 of its rules of procedure, the Council was required to elect four Vice-Presidents. Following consultations the Group of Western European and Other States had nominated Mr. Papadatos (Greece). Nominations from the other regional groups would be considered at a later meeting.

Mr. Papadatos (Greece) was elected Vice-President of the Council for 1995 by acclamation.

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

The PRESIDENT said that contrary to the expectations engendered by the end of the cold war, the world continued in a state of uncertainty. Strife prevailed, poverty remained endemic, the establishment of peace and stability remained elusive, as did the benefits of the peace dividend, and progress was woefully uneven. The root cause of that state of affairs was the failure to address the socio-economic causes of strife. Even though the importance of such factors had been apparent since the founding of the Organization, it had proved impossible to generate the political will to eliminate inequities in the global economic environment.

While there was no lack of guidelines and programmes, endorsed at the highest levels, on how to address those problems, there was a disturbing inertia, and it had proved impossible to devise mechanisms that would translate the global consensus on broad policies into viable programmes. The United Nations had the leading role to play in intergovernmental efforts to alleviate socio-economic problems, and, within the United Nations system, the Economic and Social Council was a key organ in that regard. It was now up to the members of

the Council to maximize its efficiency and make its decisions central to the Organization's work in the economic and social fields.

The restructuring exercise had already made the Economic and Social Council more decision-oriented, and the high-level segment had proved an extremely effective instrument. The theme for that segment in 1995 should encompass issues of critical importance requiring attention at the highest levels. The policy dialogue with heads of funding and specialized agencies and multilateral financial institutions had been another successful innovation, in that it facilitated coordination of United Nations system activities in the economic and social sector. Delegations might wish to agree on a theme at the upcoming organizational session for that part of the high-level segment, at the end of which it might also be appropriate to adopt a presidential summary.

The coordination segment had been useful in providing guidance to the United Nations system, and the agreed conclusions of that segment should form part of the decisions and resolutions of the Economic and Social Council. To avoid cluttering the agenda, issues needed to be taken off once they had been considered and the implementation of their agreed conclusions reviewed. It would also be preferable for the Council to decide on its themes a full year in advance.

In 1995 the Council, in support of the General Assembly, would be called upon to prepare for the triennial policy review of operational activities for development within the United Nations system. In that regard, it would be useful for the Council to provide guidelines on effective coordination. It would also be necessary to consider the question of how to deal with reports from subsidiary organs, and to determine whether expert and technical bodies could legislate in areas falling within the political domain. Guidance must be provided to such bodies without undermining their effectiveness.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The PRESIDENT said that with the adoption of its resolutions 1988/77 and 1989/14, the Council had decided upon a number of measures aimed at revitalizing and improving its functioning. Further measures to that end had been adopted by the General Assembly in its resolutions 45/264 and 48/162. On the basis of the guidelines set out in those resolutions, the Council would have before it for consideration at the organizational session the provisional agenda for that session (E/1995/2 and Add.1), and a note by the Secretary-General

containing a proposed programme of work (E/1995/1 and Add.1). He also wished to draw the Council's attention to matters requiring action by the Council at its organizational session listed under item 2 of the provisional agenda.

In conformity with the provisions of paragraph 2 (l) of Council resolution 1988/77, he intended to hold consultations on the proposed basic programme of work and other organizational matters, on the basis of which the Bureau would submit recommendations to the Council in an endeavour to shorten the duration of the organizational session.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.